DCCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 810 RC 003 838

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TITLE Cutdccr Creative Play Areas.
INSTITUTICN American Association for Health, Physical Educaticn and Recreaticn, Washington, D.C.
Pub Date 69
Note 12p.

EDRS Price EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.70
Descriptcrs Creativity, Educational Equipment, Envircnmental Educaticn, *Guidelines, Illustrations, *Cutdoor Education, *Playgrcunds, Recreaticn, Site Analysis, *Site Development, *Site Selecticn

Abstract

Guidelines are given for the development of outdoor play areas cn schocl sites tc provide children with natural areas and simple facilities fcr creative play. Site selection, analysis, and develcpment are discussed. Natural, tcpographical features of the envircnment and natural play equipment are suggested. Illustrations are alsc presented to aid in selection of equipment. (SW)

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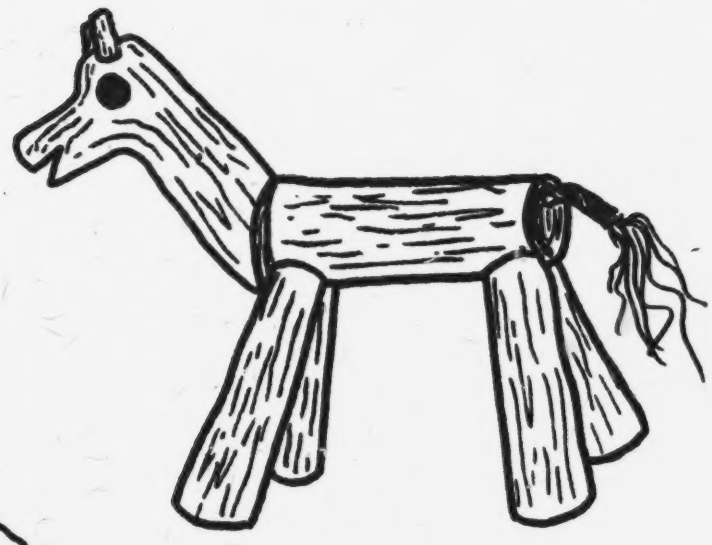
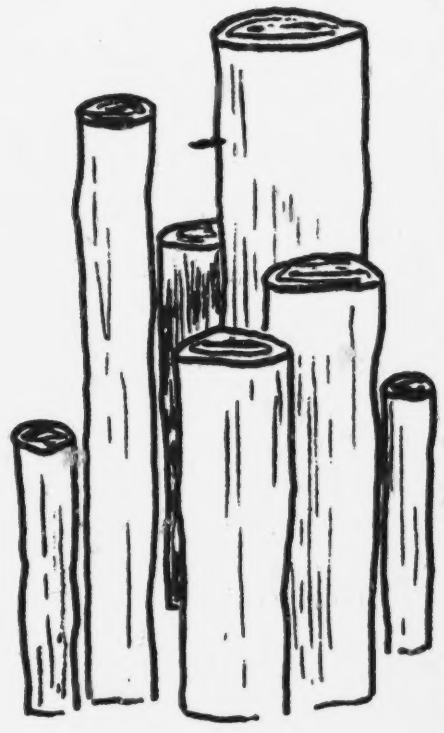
OUTDOOR CREATIVE PLAY AREAS





Prepared by

PEGGY L. MILLER

For
The Council on Outdoor Education and Camping
and
The Outdoor Education Project

of
The American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation

1969

AMERICAN ASSOCATION FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND RECREATION
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RC003838

INTRODUCTION

In these days when so many children have to play on city streets and in other artificial situations, more attention needs to be given to the development of outdoor creative play areas. It is well known that children, when provided the opportunities, will choose natural areas and simple facilities for creative play, rather than mechanical apparatus and gadgets. With the imagination and creative ideas of youngsters, the more natural kinds of play areas may provide the first adventures in outdoor education for many of them.

Grateful acknowledgement is given to Peggy L. Miller and to the following members of a subcommittee of the Council on Outdoor Education and Camping who contributed to a report that formed the basis of this manual:

Helen Hartwig (St. Louis, Missouri)
William C. Johnson (Crystal Lake, Illinois)
Edwin G. Rice (Lansing, Michigan)
Marcella D. Woods (Beaumont, Texas)

It is hoped that the ideas and suggestions in the following pages will be helpful to teachers and administrators in planning, so that some portion of the school site may be developed for a natural play area.

Julian W. Smith
Director, AAHPER Outdoor Education Project

I. RATIONALE FOR OUTDOOR CREATIVE PLAY AREAS

The entire school site should be utilized as an area in which planned and unplanned learning opportunities can be provided for children and youth under the auspices of the school. Because of the great amount of time youngsters spend in it, the outdoor environment is always educative, positively and negatively. Greater consideration should be given to the quality and kinds of learning experiences which occur on the school site. It should be utilized to a greater extent for enhancing the curriculum.

The school play area, one portion of the school site, should be given adequate attention so that the experiences provided there for children and youth contribute to their healthy growth. Much of youngsters' mental, social, and physical growth and development is achieved through play activities. Children learn through play. Play experiences are a part of the school curriculum. The outdoor creative play area might well provide the first opportunities to develop children's lasting interests in the outdoors.

The school play area should be selected and developed with considerable care. Too often it is chosen without thought and imagination. Too often the entire school site is bulldozed flat leaving a sterile area in which to learn and play. Too often the play area is designed and developed in terms of what adults (and often non-educators), not children and youth, believe to be desirable features and equipment. The great majority of school play areas are characterized by unimaginative, unsafe, hard, cold, and unnatural equipment and structures. While school buildings, curriculum, and policies have been changing rapidly during past years, school play areas have remained almost the same over the past century.

Natural features on the school site should be utilized in the selection and development of the play area. Play equipment should be integrated in the context

of the entire natural environment rather than isolated from it. The natural features and the equipment ought to stimulate children's imagination and creativity in play.

The play area should serve and meet children's interests and needs. They should be provided opportunities for swinging, balancing, climbing, dramatization, hanging, jumping, running, leaping, throwing, hopping, and constructing. They should find within the play area opportunities to make numerous individual and group choices and decisions regarding what activities they will pursue. Children and youth should be allowed and encouraged to bring equipment and tools to the play area--ropes, boards, wire, canvas, poles, tires, and the like.

The play area should be designed for the young, not adults. It should be their own territory. Children should have a part in planning, constructing, and maintaining it. In so doing, they are more likely to use, protect, and care for it.

II. GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING CREATIVE PLAY AREAS

The play area contributes to the physical, social, and mental development of youngsters. It helps promote improved health, physical strength, coordination, endurance, and balance. It encourages youngsters, individually or in groups, to determine how they will use the play area.

The entire natural environment, within and adjacent to the play area should be utilized in its natural state. Streams, hills, trees, plants, boulders, and other natural features should be integral parts of the play area. Natural

materials which are both easily accessible and inexpensive such as logs, stepping stones, tree stumps, and railroad ties should be used as play equipment and integrated with the natural environment.

In planning, the school-park concept which embraces both education and recreation should be considered whenever a new school building and site are under study.

The play area and the natural equipment within it should be viewed as subject to change according to the interests and needs of youngsters.

The cooperation and help of parents should be sought and utilized in developing the play area. Community (business, government agencies, service clubs, etc.) cooperation should be encouraged in its development. Elementary, junior and senior high school youngsters should be involved in varying degrees in the planning, building, and maintenance of the area.

Consideration should be given to the safety of children. Planning for safety, including traffic control, the maintenance of equipment, and the like, should be viewed as a continuous process. The equipment should be safe so that little or no adult supervision is necessary for its use when school is not in session.

The area and its equipment may be used individually or by groups of youngsters. There should be no waiting in line for turns to use equipment.

III. NATURAL-TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Hills for: sliding on sleds, cardboard boxes, saucers and skis
running up and down

Ponds for: ice skating
fishing
wading
sailing toy boats

Shrubs and trees for: beautification
climbing
natural windbreaks and snow fences

Boulders for: climbing and jumping

Ravines for: climbing
constructing bridges, etc.
jumping across

Streams for: fishing
wading
sailing toy boats
constructing bridges and dams

IV. NATURAL PLAY EQUIPMENT

A. Examples

- telephone poles, tree stumps, railroad ties - mounted - for balancing (high and low balance beams)
- culverts - painted, unpainted - grouped to resemble animals or insects, made into a short tunnel under a hill - horizontal or vertical - holes cut in them for climbing
- logs sawed crosswise into discs for "stepping stones"
- concrete slabs with footholes for climbing
- "animals" made from logs - trimmed, painted, joined together
- concrete tiles "capped" to look like mushrooms for climbing and jumping
- logs and poles - stood vertically with notches cut for climbing
- pillars made of cement blocks laid alternately horizontally and vertically for climbing
- varying lengths of logs - 6' and less - stood vertically side by side - for climbing and jumping
- tires planted in ground for leaping over, running obstacle course - and laid flat for leaping, jumping, and sand boxes
- logs (2' - 12'), boards, wire, bricks, wheel barrows, hammers, saws, rope, bamboo poles, "flags," canvas, plastic - for building - construction
- flat rocks, bricks forming squares, or concrete squares set into ground forming various paths and patterns - for leaping, skipping, jumping
- wooden bridges built over ravines, streams, etc.
- parallel bars made of pipes or wood - for swinging and gymnastic stunts
- different kinds, heights and lengths of fences - for climbing and balancing - picket, rail, horizontal log, vertical log - curving and straight
- old fire engine and old row boat - brightly painted and set in ground
- dead trees with bark stripped off, but branches left intact - horizontally positioned - for climbing
- wooden boxes or packing crates

- wooden barrels

- various kinds of ramps (manmade) - dirt, brick, concrete, wood, blacktop - for running up and down

- tree houses

- rubber conical street markers

- notched logs or boards (like "Lincoln Logs") for building log cabins, etc.

- stream with manmade waterfall

- sand pits

- wooden spools (telephone-electric wires)

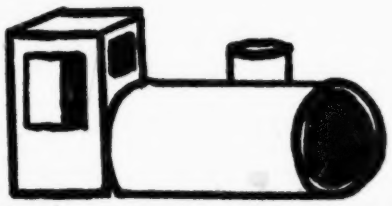
- Indian teepees made from wooden poles

- debarked dead trees with many strong branches - set vertically in ground, singly or in groups for a "forest" - for climbing

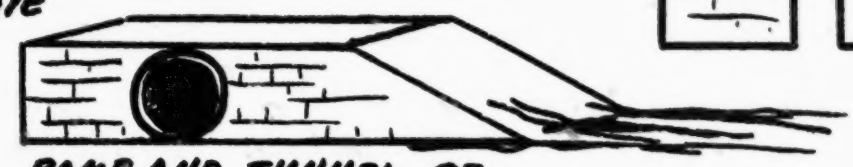
- old tractor with wheels set into the ground

- obstacle course made of various combinations of the preceding

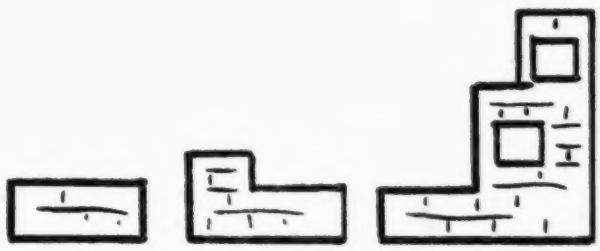
B. Sketches



TRAIN ENGINE OF CULVERT, TILE, WOODEN CRATE

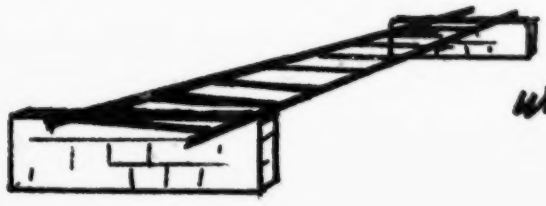


RAMP AND TUNNEL OF CEMENT BLOCKS, CULVERTS



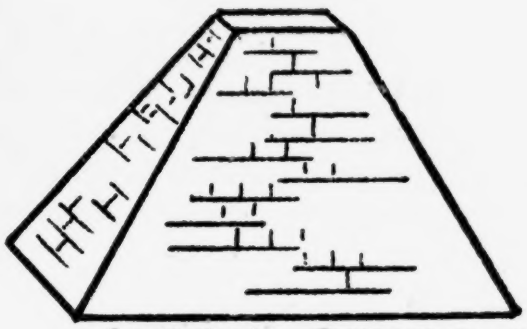
CLIMBING WALLS OF CEMENT BLOCKS OR BRICKS

STEPPING STONES

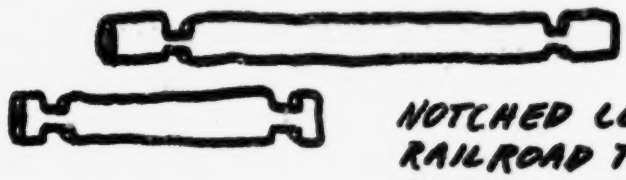


WALLS AND LADDER

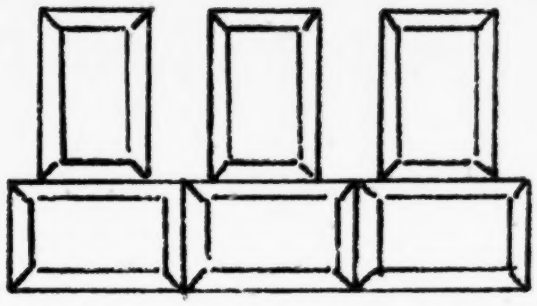
SEGMENTED ANIMAL OF CULVERTS



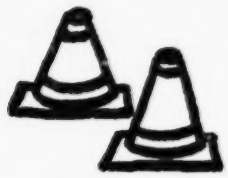
CLIMBING PYRAMID OF CONCRETE BLOCKS OR BRICKS



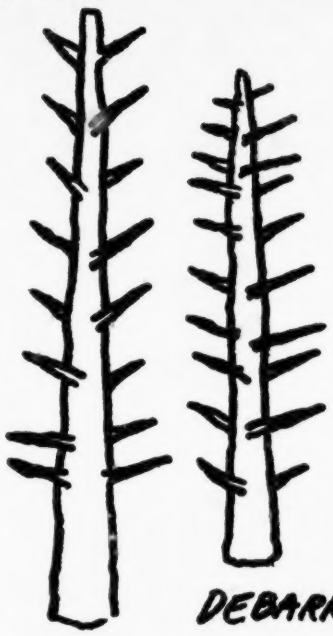
NOTCHED LOGS OR RAILROAD TIES FOR CONSTRUCTING



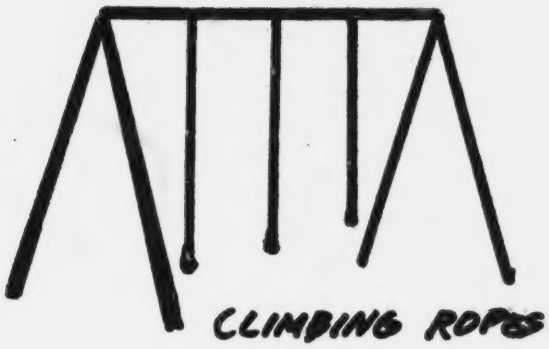
WOODEN PACKING CRATES



RUBBER TRAFFIC MARKERS

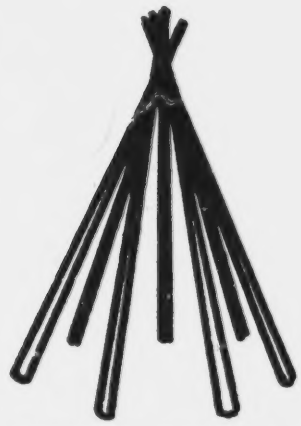


DEBARKED CONIFEROUS TREES

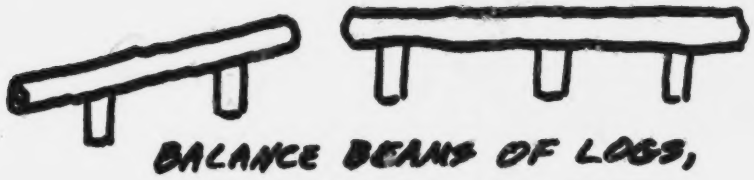


CLIMBING ROPES

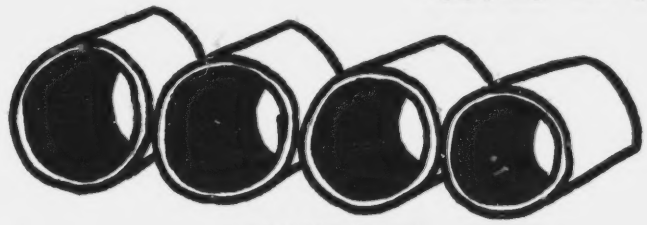
CROSS SECTIONS OF LOGS



TEEPEE OF POLES

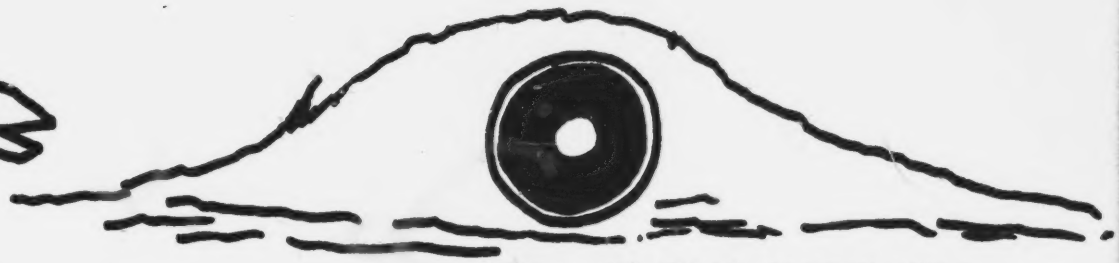


BALANCE BEAMS OF LOGS, RAILROAD TIES, OR PIPES

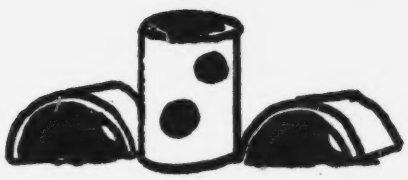


CULVERTS

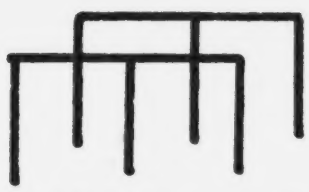
DEAD TREE TRIMMED AND PAINTED TO RESEMBLE ANIMAL



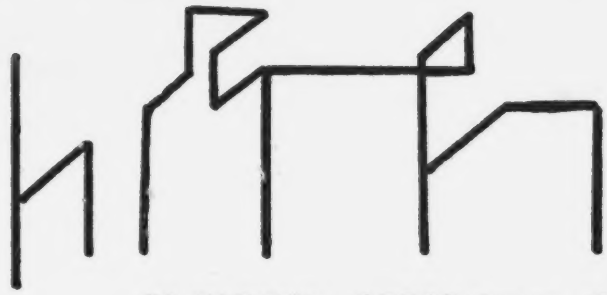
TUNNEL IN MAN-MADE HILL



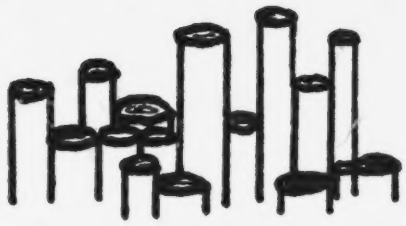
CULVERTS



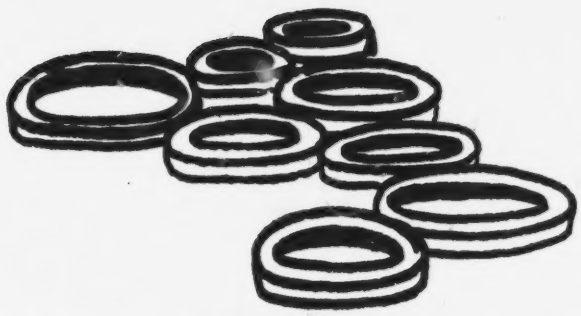
PARALLEL BARS OF PIPES OR LOGS



CLIMBING APPARATUS OF PIPES OR LOGS

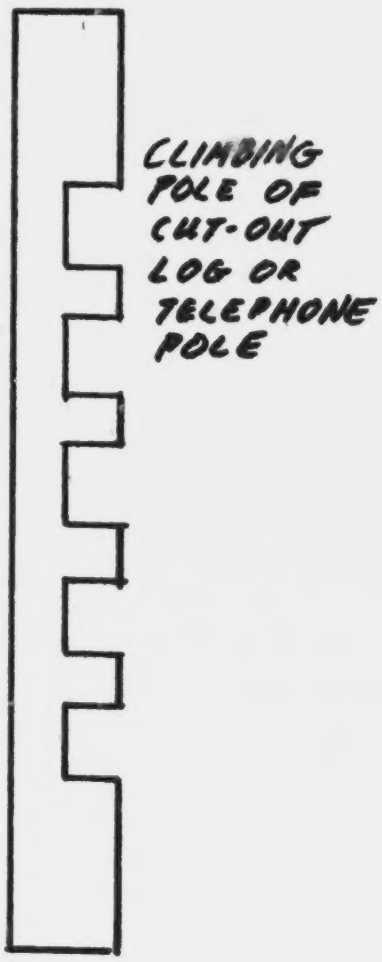


POLES, LOGS, OR RAILROAD TIES

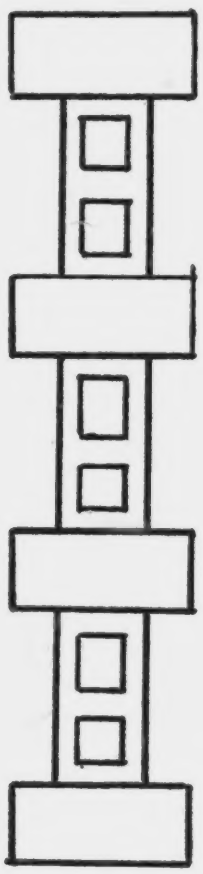


TRACTOR AND AUTOMOBILE TIRES

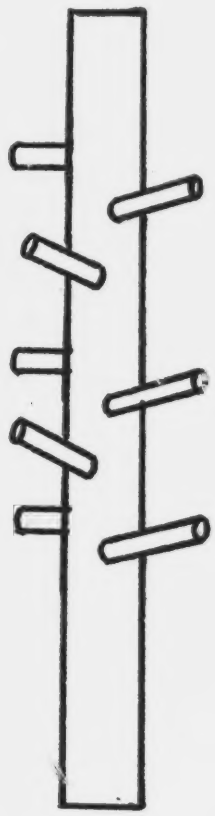
TIRES SET IN GROUND



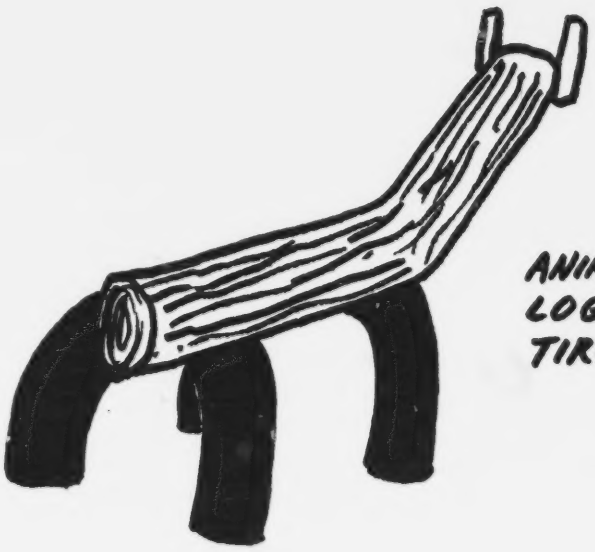
CLIMBING POLE OF CUT-OUT LOG OR TELEPHONE POLE



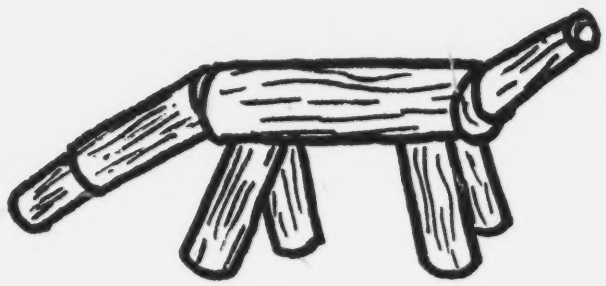
CLIMBER OF CEMENT BLOCKS OR BRICKS

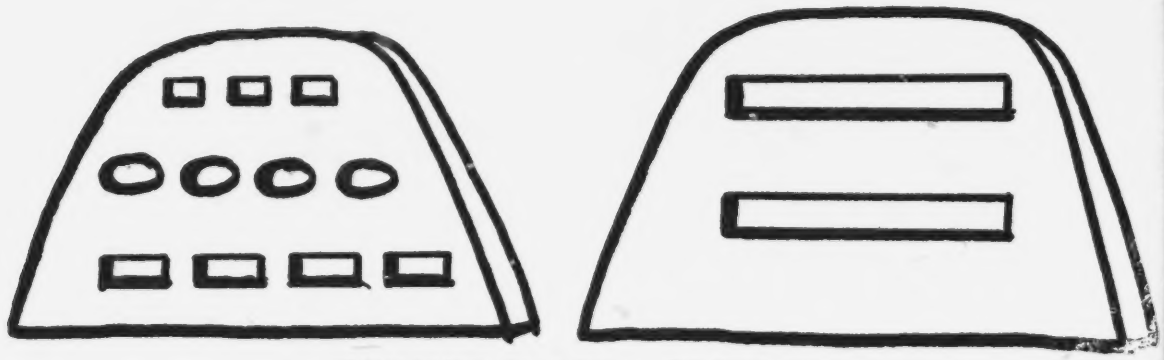


CLIMBING POLE OF LOG OR TELEPHONE POLE



ANIMALS OF LOGS AND TIRES





CEMENT SLABS FOR CLIMBING

V. SELECTED REFERENCES

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Williams, Wayne R., Recreation Places. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 1958.